

A Lifetime of Memories: Studying Abroad in Yokohama

Exchange Semester Experience October 2023 ~ August 2024

University of Sheffield, United Kingdom



My time in Japan was for a mandatory year abroad for the third year of my degree in Japan Studies at my home university in England. I was randomly allocated to attend Yokohama National University. While I was extremely apprehensive at first, not knowing much about YNU, its location, classes, or anything else, I am endlessly thankful that I was allocated to YNU. I cannot imagine a better place to have been lucky enough to study. Even before arriving in Japan, YNU provided me with every single piece of information I might have ever needed, making every piece of paperwork easy to fill out and ensuring that I understood everything I was filling in and how to process arriving at and studying at YNU would take place. Thanks to the detailed and comprehensive information provided, I felt like it was a much smoother transition for me to move to Japan and start getting used to life at YNU and in Japan in general. I was especially thankful for the information on transportation that was given to me, explaining how to get to Yokohama in the best way when I landed. Furthermore, I found the information on the ward procedures invaluable, too. I did not know how much paperwork I would be required to complete when I first moved to Japan, but the information booklets distributed to me explained the steps fully and ensured I knew as much as possible before going to the ward office. The YNU and JOY program staff have been a constant and reliable point of contact for me throughout my time here, always answering any questions and giving me advice where possible. They helped me find English-speaking doctors in Yokohama and helped me academically by setting up extra provisions for me.

While the location of YNU in Yokohama is not super ideal, the campus is a fantastic place, full of lush greenery and wildlife; it is a great environment to be in almost every day and being able to experience such a lovely campus has been a treat. There are also many amenities on campus: the library is well stocked and spacious, numerous cafes and regular food trucks, and two cafeterias. I have found that most of these were very affordable, and the food in the canteens was absolutely delicious, with many different options. It was a little difficult to understand at first, but after a friend showed me how to line up and pay, it was super

convenient. Furthermore, there are many convenience stores in the area, with a Lawsons on campus and many Family Marts nearby. Plus there are many different supermarkets and restaurants. I never found any issues with buying food nearby.

Moreover, Yokohama is a great location to live in; while the campus and dorms are a bit out of the way of the central part of the city, it is very easy to travel anywhere in the same area of Kanto. I often took day trips north to Tokyo or South to Kamakura. I found it was significantly easier and cheaper to travel such distances than I had expected, and I loved taking day trips to discover my favourite places in the area.

The community of the area was also super great to experience. Local residents are taking all the international students on their strides. We were welcomed to and sometimes even invited to events in the area where we could experience Japanese culture first-hand. I took part in an internship at a local high school, where I was able to gain experience working as an assistant language teacher for English classes. This was an incredible opportunity for me to experience Japanese high school life and teach English as a second language. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to do that internship. It was truly an incredible experience; the staff were kind and helpful. Moreover, I was able to wear yukata on Tanabata, which the Hodogaya International Lounge organised. I could dress in a yukata and have my hair done, too, for free. This was my first time wearing a yukata. It was such a lovely day, and all the women working that day were incredibly welcoming. I had some nice conversations with them. Recently, international students were also invited to attend and participate in the 盆おどり festival at the local elementary school. This was such a great day; those who invited us provided us with fresh food and drinks and took great care of us, even allowing those who wanted to wear a yukata to the festival, too. I have had numerous fun and unforgettable experiences during my time at YNU, thanks to the welcoming nature of the local community and their cooperation with the YNU international student sector.

I am extremely grateful to YNU and the JOY program for hosting me in my year abroad. This was my first time in Japan, and it has been incredible. Thank you!